

May BOM - Mrs. Taft's Choice



At age 17, Helen "Nellie" Herron decided that she would one day be the First Lady. Her parents were close friends of President and Mrs. Hayes and they had an extended visit with them at the White House. Shortly after, she met "that adorable Will Taft" at a sledding party. 5 years later, they were married. Will held a number of political and diplomatic positions in the US, Europe, Japan, China, and the Philippines. Helen and their children usually accompanied him. She played a significant role in convincing him to run for President in 1908 and William Taft was inaugurated in 1909. As First Lady, she remained closely involved in politics, sitting in on meetings and acting as her husband's closet advisor. Nellie also reorganized the White House staff and redecorated. Notably, she removed the trophy heads that Theodore Roosevelt had mounted on the walls. She took inspiration from Eastern cultures and used flowers from the White House greenhouse. She made accommodations for the White House silver collection by installing a vault and a silver cleaner. Unlike other First Ladies, she regularly visited the kitchens to oversee the preparation of food, particularly her favorite, turtle soup. She brought dancing to state dinners and extensive use of the house and grounds for entertainment to a wider variety of people. Helen held a huge gala for their 25th wedding anniversary. Helen received guests 3 afternoons a week. And all this while recovering from a stroke shortly after the inauguration.

A few facts:

*At the inauguration, she decided to ride to the White House with her husband, becoming the first presidential wife to do so.

*To save money, she purchased foods wholesale and kept a cow on White House grounds to provide milk and butter.

*She started a summer tradition at West Potomac Park with the United States Marine Band playing for the public.

*She arranged for the planting of 3000 Japanese cherry trees, accepting a donation from the mayor of Tokyo. The Potomac cherry trees would continue to be a popular tourist attraction, particularly during their blooming.

*Helen saw to the replacement of horse and buggy with the first presidential automobile fleet.

*In 1912, she donated her inauguration gown to the National Museum of American History to begin the First Ladies' Gown display, one of the Smithsonian's most popular exhibits.

*Contrary to popular lore, Will never got stuck in the bathtub. The tub was big enough to hold 4 men and weighed 2000 lbs.

Lots of color options, as you can see above. I'll be using cream, medium, and dark blue for mine.

Cut the following:

2 cream 3.5" squares

5 cream 4.25" squares

2 dark blue 3.5" squares

3 dark blue 4.25" squares

4 medium blue 4.25" squares

Set the cream and dark blue 3.5" squares aside until you are ready to lay the pieces out for assembly.



Make Half Square Triangles

Pair up the following 4.25" squares:

1 dark blue & 1 medium blue

2 dark blue and 2 cream

3 cream and 3 medium blue

Draw a diagonal line on the back of lighter square. Sew 1/4" on either side. Cut on diagonal line and press towards the darker half. Trim to 3.5". You will have 3 sets of HST as shown below. Please refer to April's BOM if you need help with making HST.

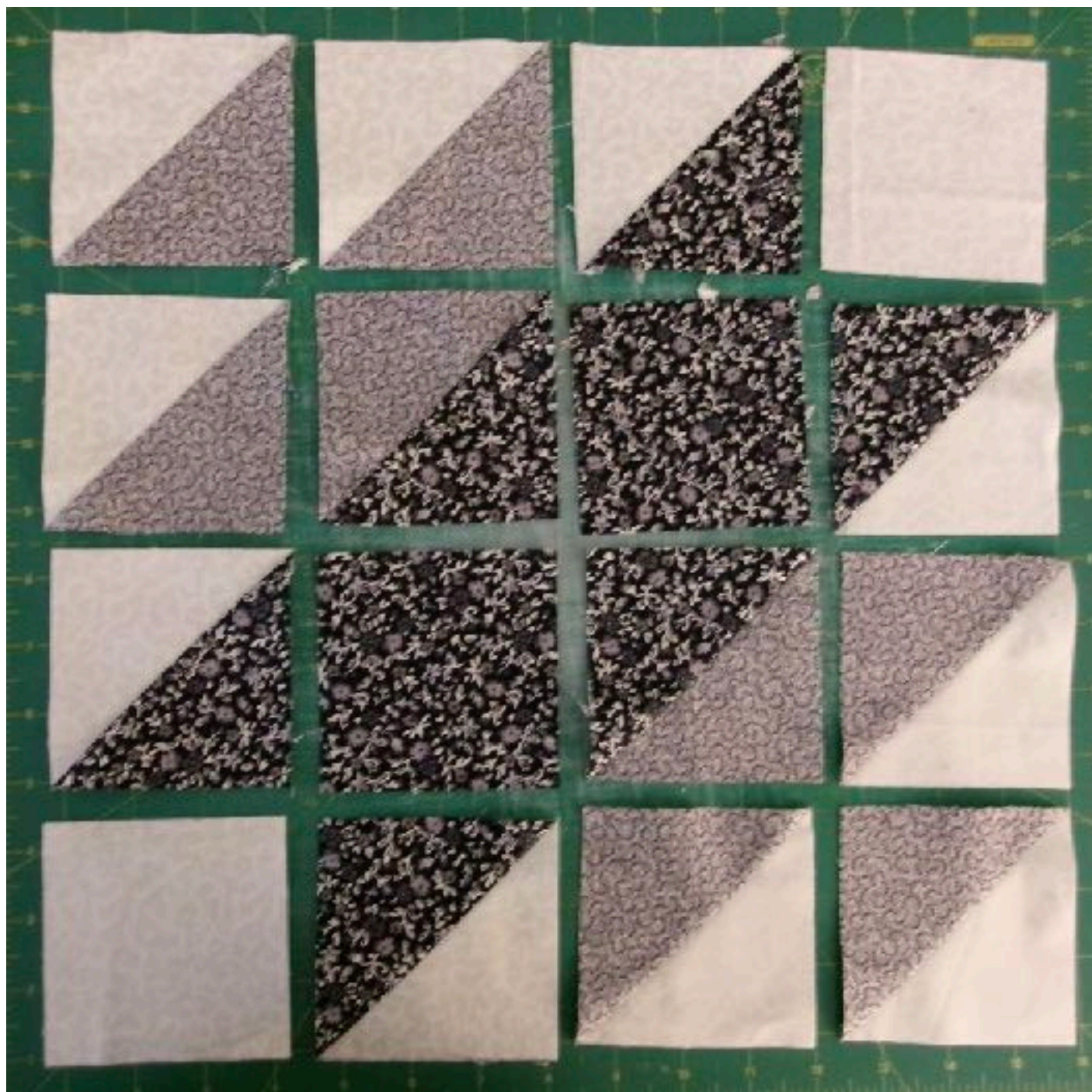


2 med/dark blue

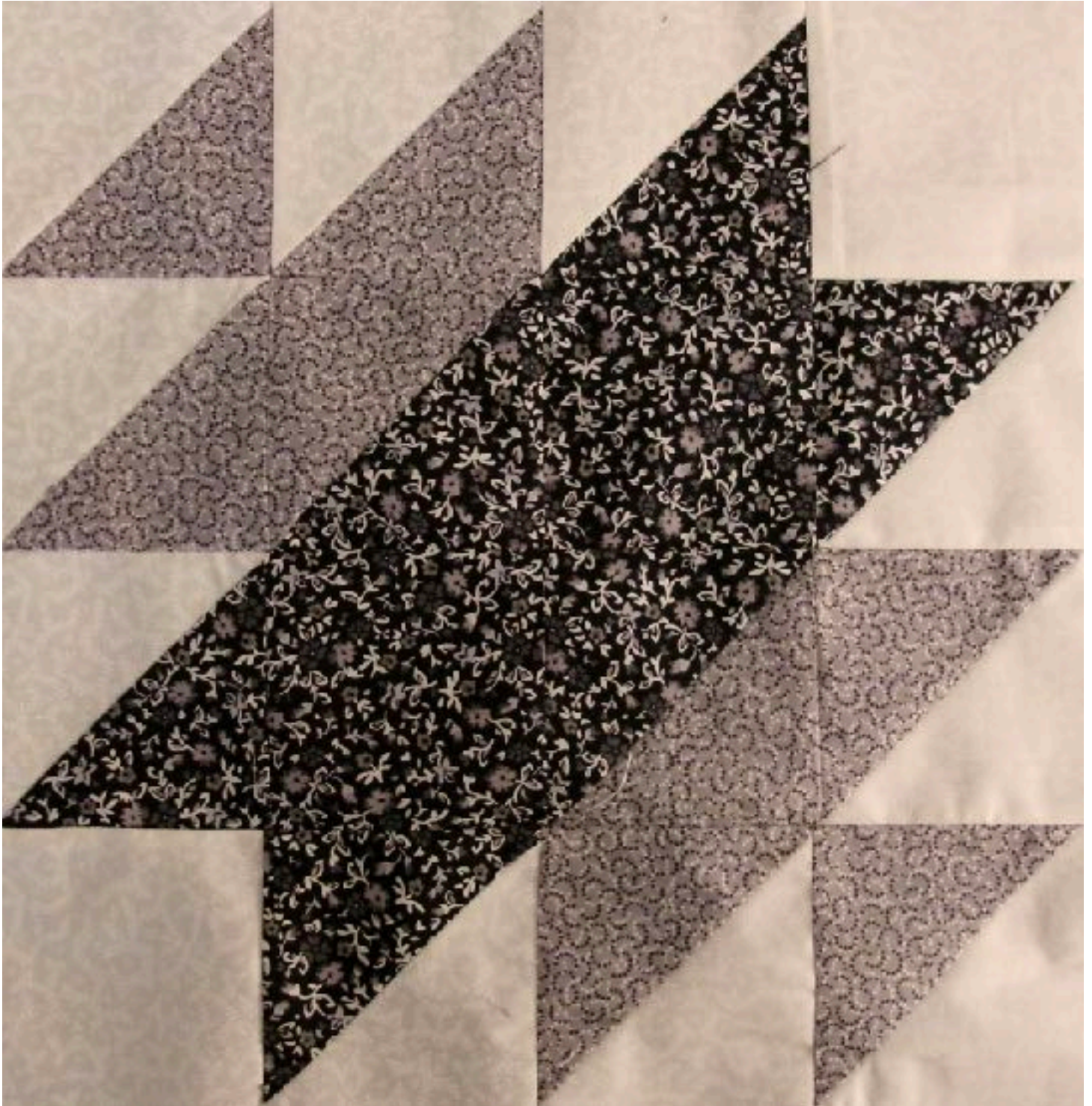
4 dark/cream

6 medium/cream

Time to assemble ! Lay out squares and HST as shown and sew together in rows. Double check your triangle direction before sewing. Press rows in opposite directions.



TA- DA !!!! Your last First Lady Block of the Month is finished!



Thanks to all who've participated this year.
I so appreciate all of your input, help, and kind words.
I look forward to our next series.

Lisa